DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 268 665 EA 018 407

TITLE	The Assistant Principal. The Best of ERIC on Educational Management, Number 82.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, Eugene, Oreg.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Apr 86
CONTRACT	400-86-0003
NOTE	5p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Publication Sales, ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon, 1787 Agate Street, Eugene, OR 97403 (free).
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071) -- Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Administrator Evaluation; *Administrator Role; *Assistant Principals; Change Agents; Discipline; Elementary Secondary Education; Leadership Training; *Literature Reviews; *Occupational Information; *Professional Development; Stress Management; Student School Relationship

ABSTRACT

The 12 publications in this annotated bibliography highlight different aspects of the assistant principal's role. One Ohio school district has created the title of "Associate Principal," a position that involves participating with the principal in planning, organizing, and evaluating the whole school program. Three articles deal with enriching and enhancing the role of the assistant principal in ways that will develop leadership capabilities as well as benefit schools. Another writer cites being a counselor and a mediator as probably the most humane and challenging aspect of the assistant principal's role. The professional development of assistant principals, according to two other articles, depends on the school principals involving them in responsibilities. One assistant principal, writing under the pseudonymn "Lee Marsh," recounts the wide range of duties and input from six principals during her career. Dealing with social problems existing in schools is a large part of an assistant principal's function. Ways to diffuse this stress are discussed in another entry. The final article admonishes the assistant principals to treat as conscious human beings the uncelebrated and unhonored students as well as the elite students. (MLF)

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Number 82, April 1986

The Best of ERIC presents annotations of ERIC literature on important topics in educational management.

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The Assistant Principal

1 **Bates, R. Clifton**, and **Joanne G. Shank**. "The Associate Principalship: A Better, More Effective Way to Manage Schools." *NASSP Bulletin*, 67,462 (April 1983), pp. 111-114. EJ 279 498.

One Ohio school district has discovered an effective alternative to the assistant principalship, eliminating the problem of an assistant principal's low status and bewilderingly diverse duties. They have created an associate principal's position.

Associates differ from assistants in their administrative role, responsibility, and relationship to other administrators. Associates join the principals in planning, organizing, evaluating, and supervising the whole school program, as well as being included in district-level decision-making. Both principals and associates, for instance, assume charge of discipline problems, staff evaluations, and curriculum supervision. Higher level administrators, such as superintendents, communicate directly with the associate as well as with the principal.

The advantages seem clearly to outweigh the disadvantages. The associate position provides growth and training opportunities for administrators. Associates in Miamisburg, Ohio, confirm that their responsibilities encourage them to develop leadership and management skills. Whereas assistant principals often are assigned a narrow range of tasks, the associates' work may prepare them for central office positions. Associates are also capable of relieving the load on an overburdened principal.

Of course, the associate's effectiveness depends largely on open lines of communication and mutual respect—between the associate and the principal, and between the school and the district administration. A principal must be open to delegating authority and must be comfortable with shared decision-making. Acceptance of the new position depends ultimately on the superintendent's public support for the semi-autonomous status of the associate principal.

Selection and evaluation of the associate principal may also present problems because the position attracts more qualified people than does the assistant principalship. Generally, communication skills are imperative in an associate principal since communication with parents, students, staff, and other administrators is at the heart of the job. Evaluation can be accomplished by involving the district office as well as the principal or by establishing management evaluation techniques, such as job targets or performance objectives.

2 **Clements, Z. J.** "Enriching the Role of the Assistant Principal." *NASSP Bulletin*, 64,436 (May 1980), pp. 14-22. EJ 221 611.

Because assistant principals so often bridge the gap between school management and faculty, Clements argues, they can improve schools in at least four areas: in attitudes, in diagnosis of needs, in the planning of learning activities, and in the development of varied instructional approaches. He sees a strong vitality in the assistant principal's role.

Assistant principals, says Clements, can provide leadership through their example. Their positive attitudes convey a personal philosophy of education that can affect an entire school through their daily contact with students and faculty. Positive attitudes can become contagious: all students can be seen as potential winners, schools as places to succeed, and teachers as builders of hope.

Clements puts special emphasis on an assistant principal's potential to improve instruction. Diagnosis and planning ("the technology of education") require that teachers understand a student's level of understanding and then build upon it. Yet administrators often fail to recognize both components of the educational process— present understanding and goals—and then to insist on instructional standards that include both. Assistant principals, however, can be particularly capable in offering guidance or hands-on help to teachers in diagnosing students' needs. Actually implementing individualized instruction (something that is more discussed than done) can also come about through an assistant principal who is knowledgeable in instructional strategies. Assistant principals' personal experiences in teaching, their work with master teachers, and their involvement in faculty workshops can all expand a school's planning and help implement personalized teaching strategies.

Assistant principals can also be indispensable in encouraging teachers to vary their instructional strategies. In one highly effective approach, they can improve present practices by developing nonthreatening demonstrations of teaching techniques. Peer-to-peer instruction, as in team learning, for instance, could become part of every teacher's repertoire—with a little encouragement. Media use could be made more effective, as well, through the assistant principal's attention. Moreover, an assistant principal who is familiar with practical approaches to independent study, study guides, contracts, or activity packages could contribute new ideas toward pupil-sustained instruction, improving students' motivation and self- reliance.

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3 **Hall, Gene E.**, and **Frances M. Guzman**. "Sources of Leadership for Change in High Schools." Presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, April 23-27, 1984. ED 250 815.

Change occurs in high schools through three interlinked paths: (1) a source of change, that is, a group or person who initially conceives of an alteration in objectives, processes, or products; (2) the people who provide an impetus, persuading a district, school, or teacher to adopt a change; and (3) the facilitators who train, consult, and reinforce teachers and administrators in implementing a change. Generally, then, the source of a change and those who encourage it come from outside a high school. The facilitators of change, though, are found inside the school. Assistant principals can be among the most important facilitators of change.

Assistant principals' effectiveness in changing practices in their schools depends on the energy of their principals in introducing and supporting changes. Principals seem to fall into two groups: responders to change, who delegate full duties to assistant principals, and managers, who tend to initiate changes and share responsibilities. The responders are less active in facilitating changes and work less as a team with their assistant principals.

Managers are the more active principals who tend to share responsibility with their assistant principals (rather than assigning one assistant principal to discipline and another to instruction). These more active principals are less bound to established structures, at least partially because of their flexible management practices and their personal involvement in various areas of the school.

Assistant principals are better at changing school practices, then, when they are part of a team led by the principal than when they must take full responsibility for introducing and maintaining changes themselves.

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4 **Howley, Philip**. "The Assistant Principalship—Changes, Speculations Offered." *NASSP Bulletin*, 69,477 (January 1985), pp. 88-89. EJ 311 662.

It is probably safe to say that most assistant principals aspire to be principals. To prepare adequately, an assistant principal must be trained in the numerous areas in which principals are responsible— not only in student relations. Consequently, many assistant principals may need to lobby for changes in their on-the-job training. This incisive article points out six areas of change that may affect many schools in improving their assistant principal's professional development.

The best principle for training assistant principals is involvement. They can be included in decision-making, in scheduling, and in budgeting, for instance. Because the curriculum changes, assistant principals who are part of curriculum strategy in a school will learn to involve the administration in this vital school function.

In fact, directing an assistant principal toward a principalship may involve rotating positions to provide broad administrative experience: an assistant principal temporarily becoming the principal, the principal moving to an assistant principal's role, or assistant principals swapping jobs. Keeping the assistant in touch with a teacher's concerns—providing experience in instructional leadership— may require allocating time each day for an assistant principal to actually teach a class. Finally, though these possibilities for variety and insight can enhance an assistant's career development, they should also be formalized in a flexible job description that includes the training aspects of the position.

5 **Iannacone, George**, and **Fred Podorf**. "Assistant Principals: Who Are They and What Changes Can They Expect in the Position?" *NASSP Bulletin*, 68,472 (May 1984), pp. 116-118. EJ 299 485.

In a job undergoing as much redefinition as an assistant principal's, how can anyone really gauge an assistant principal's success?

The authors of this article point out two social developments that affect the standards of evaluation for assistant principals: (1) the tendency of the public to expect much more from school administrators today than in the past, and (2) the assistant principals' tendency to see their positions as permanent rather than temporary. Today's assistant principal deals with more stress than did assistants in the past. For instance, they often see only the negative aspects of schools in the course of their day—racial and economic conflicts, substance abuse, culture shock, and the impact of one-parent families. These concerns become focused on the school authority figure given charge of student behavior and discipline—the assistant principal. Moreover, there is the diminishing prospects of career advancement because of declining enrollments in some regions.

The authors suggest a variety of ways to combat stress in the assistant principal's job, ways that will also improve his or her work, as well. Maintaining a collegial relationship with other administrative staff is important, for instance, as is feeling fulfilled in the assistant principal's role. Self-assessment provides a reality-check for assistants in allowing them to determine which goals are achievable. As the assistant principalship evolves, it is the strength of each assistant principal's contributions to the school that can stabilize him or her personally in the midst of professional change.

6 "Job Description for the Assistant Principal." *NASSP Bulletin*, 64,436 (May 1980), pp. 51-55. EJ 221 618.

Defining the actual role of the assistant principal is among the central concerns in integrating assistants into the school life. The *NASSP Bulletin* compiled this job description from many such descriptions actually used in schools.

It is an aggregate job description that will apply to each assistant principal only in part, depending on the areas to which he or she is assigned. As such, it can be used to compare and develop actual job descriptions in the several major categories listed. These categories are the responsibilities for administration, teaching personnel, student personnel, curriculum, and external relations.

In general, the assistant principal is expected "to maintain an effective working relationship with other administrators, teachers, maintenance staff, clerical staff, and student personnel," as well as involve themselves in curriculum reviews and community relations.

Accompanying the article is an evaluation form—listing forty diverse duties of an assistant principal—that helps apply the comprehensive job description to the task of rating an assistant's performance.

7 **Lindsay, James W.** "Groom Your Assistants for the Big Time." *Executive Educator*, 7,2 (February 1985), pp. 41, 48. EJ 313 654.

Lindsay is a principal who takes seriously the training of assistant principals. His methods include three areas of concern, beginning with the selection of assistants. Selecting a good assistant may involve criteria many principals overlook, such as the candidate's reaction to stress—a primary concern in a successful school administrator. Other indicators of potential success Lindsay lists are perhaps more predictable, such as previous success in management or other work and sterling personal attributes. But he stresses that the selection of the assistant principal be deliberate and detailed.

Between selection and evaluation, the chosen assistant's administrative training should be orderly and progressive, preparing the assistant for a full principalship. Starting with a carefully prepared job description, assistants should have job targets that specify tasks and skills needing particular attention. Lindsay suggests that assistants also be given experience in a variety of tasks in building administration, as well as be provided with opportunities for professional development external to the school, for example, joining professional organizations or attending professional conferences.

Finally, you know how well an assistant is doing, the author points out, from two sources: your evaluation and the assistant's self- evaluation. He notes that, besides formal evaluations, informal and ongoing evaluations often create the real job improvements. Deliberate skill-building for assistant principals takes time and commitment, but, in the experience of this principal, it pays off.

8 **Marsh, Lee**. "Nobody Knows the Principals I've Seen." *Educational Leadership*, 38,7 (April 1981), pp. 542-543. EJ 245 686.

Besides being disciplinarians and counselors, assistant principals can also provide valuable insight into the performance of the principals under whom they work. Surely, serving under six principals would allow an assistant principal to compare styles and make some valuable conclusions about how best to fit assistant principals into the administrative routines of schools.

One assistant principal, who writes under the pseudonymn "Lee Marsh," recounts the wide range of duties and input from principals in her career. The principals, in every case, saw the assistant's role differently: viewpoints ranged from the assistant being involved in every aspect of school life as the agent of the principal in absentia to being given an office in the attic of the school and told to stay put. Marsh's saga recounts transitions of personal energy, as well— the change from the enthusiasm of a fresh assistant to a weary, seasoned trooper.

From these experiences, Marsh concludes that the best principal she worked with had shared responsibilities with her to nurture and guide her toward full responsibility in administration. Her favorite principal had even exercised personal concern in guiding her assistants, tutoring them for their graduate-school exams, and involving them in major school-policy decisions. According to this assistant principal, the worth of her job—and her own sense of self- worth—was immeasurably heightened by one principal's full cooperation. Her message to principals is clear: "We're committed and able. Include us. Share with us. We're people, too."

9 **Mitchell, Mack**. "Assistant Principals Can Be Effective Counselors, Mediators." *NASSP Bulletin*, 64,436 (May 1980), pp. 29-32. EJ 221 614.

Compared to the myriad of other roles an assistant principal can fill, being counselor and mediator is probably the most humane—and challenging. Simply by being a disciplinarian, an assistant becomes an authority dealing with human problems. But what are the underlying causes of these problems?

Quite often, problems arise from the cryptic way in which rules may be enforced in schools. Even the manner in which the assistant principal dispenses justice and enforces school rules can enhance communication with students or destroy it. For instance, some discipline problems can probably be limited or relieved when a student knows that the disciplinarian will listen as well as impose penalties. Indeed, if an assistant principal can discuss a problem after imposing penalties, the student may be more prone to share openly and to listen without worrying about what is going to happen next.

If being a counseling disciplinarian is a sensitive job, being a mediator between teachers and students is a major task of diplomacy. In preserving the delicate balance of mutual respect within a school, the assistant principal often holds the scales. An assistant principal may do an injustice to the school by defending the actions of a teacher who is actually at fault in disciplining a student. Indeed, an assistant principal may need to tell a teacher that he or she has mishandled a disciplinary problem. Such an awkward situation may require coordinating a common, schoolwide approach to discipline and conflict resolution.

10 **Potter, James M., Jr.** "Enhancing the Role of the Assistant Principal." *NASSP Bulletin*, 64,436 (May 1980), pp. 9-13. EJ 221 610.

"Assistant principals, no longer content to be 'bottom-line' administrators, want to become more involved in their schools' total education programs. They want to participate in planning, evaluation, decision making, and supervision." With this observation, Potter introduces ten suggestions for assistant principals to bring out the best possibilities in their jobs. He covers the importance of preparation for the position, the social extensions of the effective assistant principal, the importance of an assistant principal's rewarding and involving other staff members, and the administrative duties essential for an assistant principal. In short, he covers the qualities of leadership desirable in an effective assistant principal.

Preparation, he observes, can involve being aware of the job description (no small matter for many assistant principals) and being prepared for the many details perhaps not contained in job descriptions: the prank calls at two a.m., the conferences and clinics the assistant must attend, the sporting events to support. The social components of the job also extend beyond the official description— indeed, they can often be as important as the official duties themselves. Being involved in community groups—and, conversely, involving the community in school activities—can foster the good external relationships that are important in enhancing school effectiveness.

Besides reaching out to others, the assistant principal also must encourage others to give input into the administration of the

school. This may involve making special efforts to congratulate students and parents on good athletic or dramatic performances, or asking for faculty or student opinions on issues that affect them.

The administrative skills of assistant principals require leadership and diplomacy. They must learn to delegate authority—perhaps even to redelegate authority inappropriately given to assistant principals in the past. They must learn to defuse conflict and relieve tension.

Overall, their duties may be divided into four general areas: (1) instruction, teacher evaluation, and inservice; (2) student attendance and discipline; (3) vocational education and plant maintenance; and (4) athletics and activities. With forethought, then, the role of the assistant principal can be formalized, with responsibilities divided and clarified.

11 **Reed, Donald B.** "The Work of the Secondary Vice Principalship: A Field Study." Presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, April 23-27, 1984. 44 p. ED 246 527.

What does a vice principal actually do? Despite the body of research and speculation that exists on the job descriptions of vice (or assistant) principals, their role in schools remains unclear. To fill this gap in information with empirical evidence, Reed performed a revealing job analysis of eight assistant principals in two medium- sized school districts in southern California. Viewing the schools as organizations requiring both social stability and student development, Reed found that the main responsibility of vice principals was in helping to provide stability.

Although vice principals may be responsible for the master schedule of a school or its activity calendar, it appears that supervision commands their attention most of the time. Supervision typically involves monitoring students' activities, supporting activities that add to a school's identity or values (such as student or community activities), and disciplining students. An organizational chart provided by the author makes clear that a vice principal plays an essential role in maintaining both the curricular and extracurricular purposes of a school.

Reed observes that vice principals share four characteristics in their positions. First, they work primarily with students, not with adults. Hence they are often seen by students as the most important administrator in the school. Second, vice principals often have unscheduled work days because they must respond to unexpected events. So the job may soon become physically and mentally exhausting.

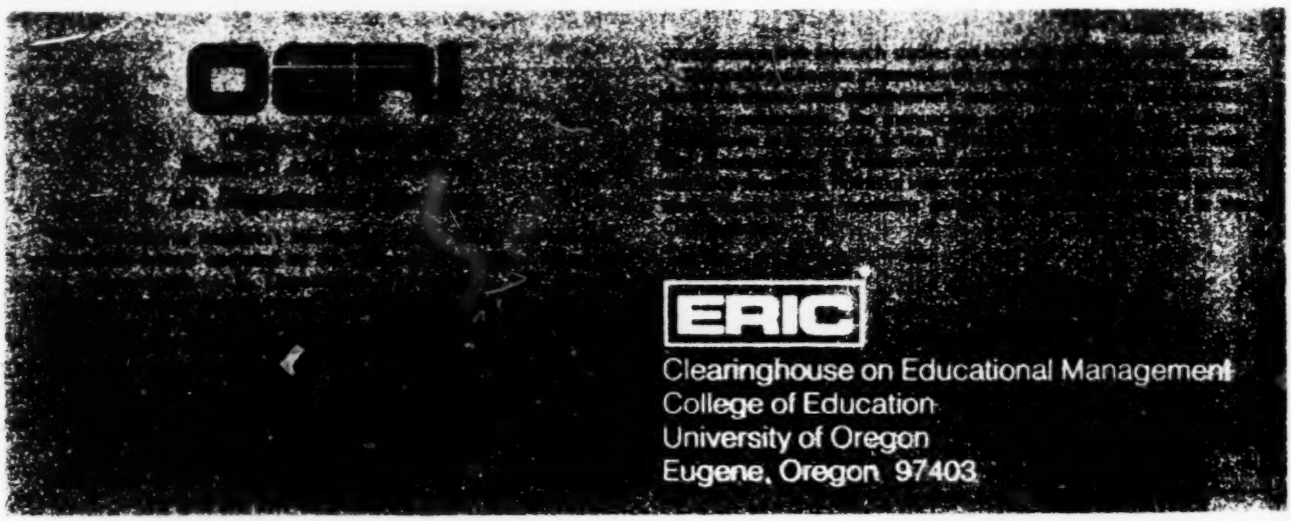
Furthermore, despite being responsible for supporting students' activities and the positive side of the school, vice principals devote most of their time to the negative task of discipline. Consequently, many develop cynical attitudes toward students. Fourth, because discipline problems are perennial, vice principals do not seem to be very effective as administrators—at least from an outside view. Thus, a vice principal is an easy target for criticism.

12 **Welch, Robert J.** "Go Tell the Spartans." *NASSP Bulletin*, 64,436 (May 1980), pp. 56-65. EJ 221 619.

The Spartans were the elite warriors of ancient Greece, revered in history for their noble stand at Thermopylae. But there were others, unsung and far more numerous, who died there, too, repelling the invading Persians. An so in our schools, there are two sorts of students, as well: the Spartans, who are remembered, acknowledged, and celebrated; and the Others, who are never cheerleaders, quarterbacks, or honor-society members. They are the greasers, who work on cars instead of on French, who go to work after school instead of to pep club. They are the smokers who defy the rules (but do no worse than the teachers and administrators who smoke). They are the kids in love, who are hurt and angry when authority figures mock them. They are the Unkempt, who offend coaches by playing basketball unsupervised in the gym.

All these allies of the Spartans need our consideration, in our roles as administrators, teachers, and fellow human beings. The assistant principals (most often the disciplinarians) must handle the outcomes of others' unconsciousness and lack of compassion in dealing with the Others. For even those uncelebrated and unhonored in our midst must be treated as conscious human beings, just as we would want to be. The assistant principal can see the "harmless kidding" that went awry when a teacher teased a student about a sweetheart. The assistant principal patches up matters for a staff member who failed to explain a disciplinary action to a student because of wrongly assuming the student would be unable to understand. The assistant principal must adjudicate after a teacher fails to discriminate between enforcement and entrapment.

Clearly, it will be the judgment of history whether administrators ably discharged their special duty to see that they divided their charges not into tribes of greater and lesser significance, but only into different tribes.



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